

GRADE CROSSING CLOSURE

With over 200,000 public and private crossings across the country, closing grade crossings is a priority of the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT). Closure projects enhance public safety while supporting the important role the rail system plays in the nation's economy. USDOT has given each state a goal to reduce the number of grade crossings by twenty-five percent, and MDOT's Local Grade Crossing Program includes an on-going initiative to support this goal. The closure process is frequently referred to as crossing consolidation, as traffic from the closed crossing is effectively being rerouted and consolidated at other area crossings.

Michigan has approximately 5100 public grade crossings - fewer than half of which are equipped with automatic warning devices. However, it is an unfortunate fact that nearly 50% of all vehicle/train crashes occur at crossings with operating flashing-light signals and/or gates. The only way to truly make an at-grade crossing safe is to eliminate it. For this reason, grade crossing closure is an important part of the Program's annual safety improvement plan.

The Local Grade Crossing Program works with local road agencies, emergency and fire response teams, law enforcement officials and community leaders throughout the state to identify grade crossings on local roads that may be good candidates for closure.

Residents can participate in the process during public hearings typically conducted by the local government. The Department's new 6-minute video provides an overview of the issues local governments face when considering a closure. The video is perfect for explaining program details at public hearings or board meetings. An accompanying informational brochure also is available. MDOT representatives will attend meetings, as requested, to make presentations and/or answer questions. Public input is very important to the process, as the final decision to close a crossing is a local responsibility.



Because of the importance given to crossing closures, state law allows MDOT to provide cash incentives to the road authority for use on any transportation project within its jurisdiction. In addition, Federal and railroad incentive payments also may be available.

Other community benefits include reduced traffic speed and volume on the closed street, reduced maintenance costs, and reduced noise levels because the trains no longer need to blast their horns at a closed crossing.

However, the most important benefit of a closed crossing is the enhancement to public safety. Once an at-grade crossing is eliminated, that crossing will never again be the site of a vehicle/train crash, with its accompanying potential for tragic deaths, personal injuries, property damage, fires, explosions, and/or hazardous material spills.

Please contact the Local Grade Crossing Program at (517) 373-9027 for more information.